

AUGUST 5, 1978

ON TO VENUS: ANOTHER U.S. PROBE

ANNCR: THE SECOND OF TWO SPACECRAFT DESIGNED TO PROBE THE MYSTERIES OF THE PLANET VENUS IS SCHEDULED FOR LAUNCH BY THE UNITED STATES NEXT WEEK (AUG. 7). VOA CORRESPONDENT RUSSELL SPLANE HAS THE DETAILS FROM MIAMI.

VOICE: THE PIONEER VENUS MULTIPROBE -- A SPACECRAFT DESIGNED TO PIERCE THE ATMOSPHERE OF VENUS AND GRASH-LAND ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE--IS SCHEDULED TO BE LAUNCHED EARLY MONDAY FROM CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA. THE LIFT-OFF WILL FOLLOW BY ALMOST THREE MONTHS THE LAUNCH OF PIONEER VENUS-ONE, AN ORBITING SPACECRAFT THAT'S DESIGNED TO CIRCLE THE PLANET FOR AT LEAST EIGHT MONTHS. MONDAY'S MULTIPROBE, KNOWN AS PIONEER VENUS-TWO, LIKE THE VENUS-ONE THAT PRECEDED IT, IS TO BE LAUNCHED ATOP AN ATLAS CENTAUR ROCKET. MONDAY'S LAUNCH IS SCHEDULED FOR THREE THIRTY-SEVEN AM, EDT, WITH A "WINDOW" (LAUNCH INTERVAL) THAT EXTENDS TO FOUR TWENTY-TWO AM.

WHILE VENUS-TWO IS SCHEDULED FOR LAUNCH NEARLY THREE MONTHS AFTER VENUS-ONE, IT WILL FLY A SHORTER TRAJECTORY AND WILL ARRIVE AT THE PLANET JUST FIVE DAYS AFTER THE ORBITER. VENUS-ONE'S SCHEDULED ARRIVAL IS ON DECEMBER FOURTH OF THIS YEAR. ON DECEMBER NINTH, VENUS-TWO IS TO ARRIVE. IT'S CALLED A "MULTIPROBE" BECAUSE IT IS SUPPOSED TO SPLIT INTO FIVE PARTS--A SO-CALLED "BUS" AND FOUR ATMOSPHERIC ENTRY PROBES. THE SPLIT-UP WILL OCCUR WHILE THE SPACECRAFT IS TWENTY FLYING DAYS OUT FROM THE PLANET AT A DISTANCE OF ABOUT THIRTEEN MILLION KILOMETERS. THE PROBES ARE TO RADIO BACK WHAT SCIENTISTS HOPE WILL BE THE MOST USEFUL DATA EVER RECEIVED ON THE DENSE VENUS ATMOSPHERE. AND WHILE THE PROBES ARE EXPECTED TO CEASE OPERATING AFTER THEIR IMPACT ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE, SCIENTISTS SAY SOME

MAY SURVIVE THE INTENSE HEAT AND MAY EVEN TRANSMIT SIGNALS FOR A FEW SECONDS.

THE PURPOSE OF THE TWIN MISSION IS TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON QUESTIONS ABOUT VENUS THAT HAVE PUZZLED MAN FOR YEARS. WHY, SCIENTISTS ASK, DO TWO PLANETS--EARTH AND VENUS--OF ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AND MASS, AND SITUATED AT COMPARABLE DISTANCES FROM THE SUN, HAVE ATMOSPHERES THAT HAVE EVOLVED SO DIFFERENTLY? WHILE EARTH IS A WATER-RICH PLANET ON WHICH LIFE THRIVES, VENUS IS A DRY, HOT AND DESOLATE WORLD, APPARENTLY WITHOUT LIFE. THE TWO PIONEER VENUS SPACECRAFT MAY SHED SOME LIGHT ON THIS PLANETARY MYSTERY.

WJL